

Sound Transit

Sound Transit is a public transit agency delivering a mix of commuter rail, light rail, regional bus routes and new transit facilities to the residents in King, Pierce and Snohomish counties. If transportation modes hummed along smoothly in the Central Puget Sound area, there would be no need for Sound Transit – but many of us work, shop, play or attend classes many miles away from where we live.

The State Legislature passed a law in 1993 allowing the creation of Sound Transit and giving it the responsibility to plan, build and operate a high capacity transit system (HCT). The voters in King, Snohomish, and Pierce counties then voted in 1996 to approve Sound Transit’s plan for bringing express buses, commuter trains, and electric light rail to our area.

An important component of the Sound Transit plan includes the concept of subarea equity. Subarea equity is a unique feature that delivers a fair share of investments to each of the five geographic areas – Snohomish County, North King County, South King County, East King County, and Pierce County. This feature assures that Sound Transit taxes raised within an area are used for capital projects and operations that directly benefit that area. Each sub-area has its own budget based on local revenues for that area plus any grants and partnership funds for specific projects. Projects for each area were identified through a public process prior to the 1996 vote. There are strong safeguards in place to prevent the subarea equity policy from changing, which include the requirement of a two-thirds vote on the Sound Transit Board.

Before the creation of Sound Transit there was no regional agency to connect the different transit systems of these areas. As a result it was difficult if not impossible to get, for example, from Seattle to Tacoma without using a car. Today – thanks to the work of Sound Transit - it is possible to take a bus or a train to many places in our region. In South King County we have reaped significant Sound Transit benefits in two out its three distinct parts

ST Regional Express. Sound Transit’s fleet of buses began serving our area in September 1999. South King County enjoys bus service connections to the eastside, the airport, Federal Way, Auburn, Renton, West Seattle, Downtown Seattle, Tacoma, and Lakewood. ST Express is more



than just buses. Several HOV direct access capital projects are planned along the South King County I-5 corridor as well as a transit center/parking structure in Federal Way and a park-and-ride along Pacific Highway.

Sounder Commuter Rail. Sounder commuter rail began service between Tacoma and Seattle in September 2000. South King County has been extremely well served with this part of the Sound Transit plan. The Sounder trains are very popular and always full – carrying over 11,000 passengers each week. They run on existing tracks and will eventually link Everett, Seattle, Tacoma and Lakewood – a total of 82 miles through three counties with stops at 12 or more stations. Because the trains run on tracks free from highway tie-ups and weather slowdowns, each ride is reliable and safe. Two daily round trips run from Tacoma to Seattle, with stops in our South King County area at new stations in Auburn, Kent, and Tukwila. A third trip is expected to be added in the spring of 2003. Sounder also offers special trips for special events like baseball games.

Link Light Rail. Link electric light rail is the most controversial and contentious of the Sound Transit plans. Frought with budget uncertainties and many changes to the original route, it now awaits funding commitments on several levels, including federal, state, and local sources. Although significant problems remain, link light rail is moving forward. We must start somewhere and building a foundation upon which to expand is a reasonable first step. I may not personally use light rail upon its completion – but my children and my grandchildren will. In San Francisco and Portland light rail was heavily opposed in its early years but is now highly valued and running well, meeting the transit needs in those communities. I am working hard to extend the first phase of the light rail line all the way to the airport. As a Sound Transit Board member representing South King County, this is one of my highest priorities.

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Julia would like
to invite you...

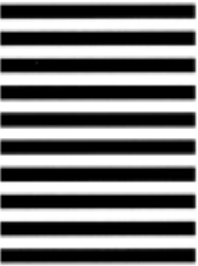
See inside for more information
about upcoming
Transportation Forum

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King County Councilmember

Julia
PATTERSON

District 13 Summer 2002

Greetings Friends and Neighbors,

We are facing a critical crossroad in South King County as we face decisions related to the transportation problems in this region. Our quality of life – the very time we spend with our families – is eroding. So many of you have shared with me that your levels of frustration are compounded each day that passes without an identified and agreed upon transportation solution. South King County, in particular, had the biggest share of the County’s growth over the past decade – more than half – and the South remains the largest of the three subareas in King County (North, Eastside, South) with more than 630,000 residents. 55% of South King County residents who commute leave their South subarea of origin to go to work. The increase in growth has not been matched by an investment in transportation infrastructure. As a result, the costs of the various proposals which seek to offer solutions may well outweigh the voter’s ability to pay for them.

Please join me as I host a transportation community forum in your area. Without staying in tune to your concerns, desires, and opinions I am unable to represent you as well as you deserve. I need to hear from you on:

- **Wednesday, September 18th from 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm in Council Chambers at Burien City Hall, 415 SW 150th Street, Burien, WA 98166** or
- **Saturday, September 21st from 1:30 pm – 3:30 pm in Council Chambers at Kent City Hall, 220 Fourth Avenue S., Kent, WA 98032**

It’s important to me to create opportunities which will allow you to learn more about major transportation projects affecting our community, as well as give you a chance to express your concerns and ideas to those decision-makers and policy-setters who ultimately affect your quality of life. Representatives from the Washington State Senate Transportation Committee, the Washington State Department of Transportation, Sound Transit and King County Metro Transit will be available to address your questions and concerns. I always appreciate hearing from you – it makes me a better advocate for South King County. If you are unable to attend in person, please consider sending me your comments on the postage-paid RSVP card that is attached to this newsletter.

Transportation is not only about roads or rail or buses. It’s about how people can get to where they need to go in the most efficient manner. It’s about quality of life, it’s about family and friends – it’s about having the time you need to do the things in life that are important. You are the ones that best know what we need to do in order to bring our system up to an acceptable level. I hope to hear from you soon so that we can put together the best transportation package for our community.

With great appreciation for each and every one of you -

Julia Patterson

Julia Patterson
King County Councilmember, District 13



Chair:

- **Utilities Committee**
- **Regional Policy Committee**

Member:

- **Transportation Committee**
- **Regional Transit Committee**
- **Regional Water Quality Committee**

Board Member:

- **Sound Transit**

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Statewide Transportation Plan - Referendum 51 (R-51)

R-51 is a referendum to the voters on the question of whether fees and taxes should be raised to fund state and local transportation projects. The fee and tax increases are intended to raise approximately \$7.8 billion over 10 years to improve highway capacity, public transportation, and passenger and freight rail.

Major elements of the bill include:

- The establishment of the Legislative Transportation Accountability Committee for project review and oversight.
- A 15% increase in weight fees on trucks over 10,000 lbs. in 2003 and an additional 15% increase imposed in 2004. The increase does not apply to pickup trucks and recreational vehicles.
- An increase in the state gas tax of 9 cents per gallon. The increase is staged by applying a 5 cent per gallon increase in 2003 and an additional 4 cent per gallon increase in 2004.
- A sales tax surcharge of 1% applied to the sale of new and used vehicles beginning April 1st, 2003.

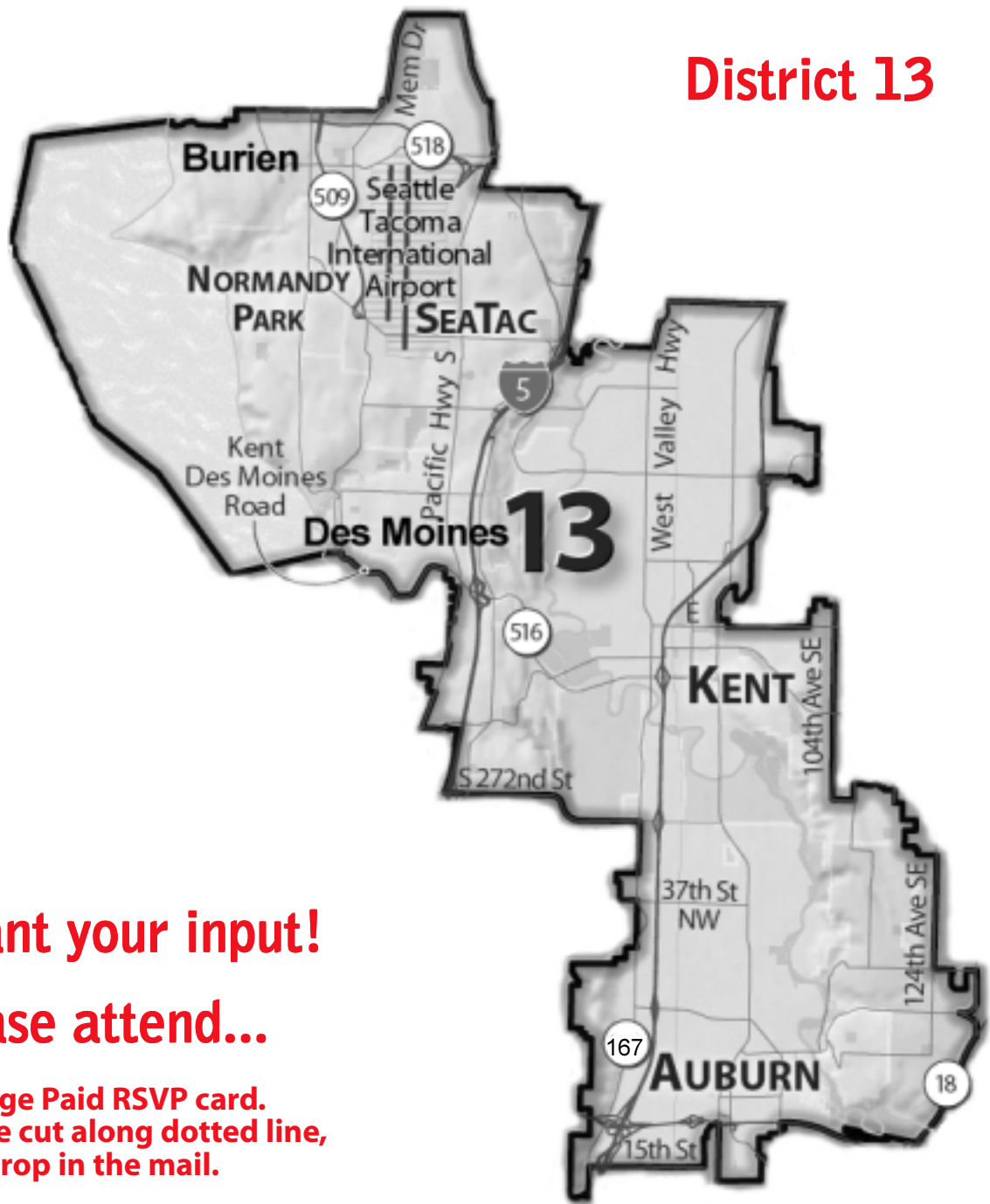
It's up to you – each voter in Washington State – to decide whether or not it should become law. You'll make the choice this November, on election day.

I've wondered just what specifically R-51 does for our growing South King County and I've learned that many projects in our area are included in the plan. However, many of these projects cannot be built without supplemental funding, some of which could come from a Regional Transportation Investment District (RTID). An RTID may be formed if voters approve a later, separate ballot measure (see RTID section in this newsletter). Projects on the R-51 list in South King County include:

- \$500 million to extend SR 509 from S. 188th St. to connect with I-5.
- \$5 million for a new interchange at S. 272nd St. and I-5.
- \$8 million to study the SR-167 corridor.
- \$37 million to construct a new HOV lane on SR-167 northbound from 15th St. SW to 15th St. NW.
- \$1,770 million to improve I-405, including a new interchange with SR-167.
- \$8.5 million to extend and grade separate S. 228th St. in Kent.

R-51 includes a specific list of transportation projects – it then tracks both the revenues and the progress on each project. R-51 also stipulates that new revenues must be deposited into transportation-only accounts. The state constitution requires that gas tax revenues must be used solely on transportation projects. R-51 also requires mandatory quarterly audits for a full accounting of the revenues, progress on each project and expected completion dates.

District 13



I want your input!

Please attend...

Postage Paid RSVP card. Please cut along dotted line, and drop in the mail.

Yes, I will attend the transportation forum on:

- ☐ **Wednesday, September 18th at Burien City Hall, 6:30-8:30 p.m.**
- ☐ **Saturday, September 21st at Kent City Hall, 1:30-3:30 p.m.**

No, I will not be able to attend but I would like you to know *(please feel free to comment on any subject matter you wish)*:

Name, Address, Phone Number (optional):

Regional Transportation Investment District (RTID)

The Governor's Blue Ribbon Commission (BRCT) was established in 1998 and was tasked to assess the local, regional and state transportation systems, ensure that current and future money is spent wisely, make the system more accountable and predictable, and prepare a 20 year plan for funding and investing in our transportation system. In its final report, the BRCT issued 18 recommendations. One of those recommendations stated that regions be provided with the ability to plan, select, fund and implement projects identified to meet the region's transportation and land use goals.

As a result of that work, I – along with several of my colleagues in the Washington State Senate – co-sponsored Senate Bill 6140, a bill authorizing the creation of a regional transportation investment district (RTID) that would be tasked with crafting a regional transportation improvement package. The bill passed in March 2002 with overwhelming support in both the House and the Senate.

In order to create RTID King, Pierce and Snohomish counties have now formed a planning committee. This committee, comprised of representatives from each of the three counties and a non-voting member representing the Washington State Department of Transportation, will select the projects, recommend which revenue choices it will use and will then send the plan to the respective county councils for approval to be placed on the ballot. With voter approval, the RTID would be created, the plan would be approved, and taxes that would pay for the plan would be implemented. The planning committee would then serve as the governing board.

The planning committee is currently working on finalizing the RTID list of projects that are to be included in the plan. In addition, they are also deciding upon which taxes should be levied to pay for those projects – and at what level. RTID members

and staff will continue to work on a regional proposal over the next several months. Their goal is to get a package ready for voters sometime next spring.

Although RTID projects have not been decided upon, those on the table for discussion in King County include Interstate 405, replacement of the Alaskan Way Viaduct, SR 520, SR 509, SR 167, and Sound Transit's link light rail project. RTID funds may only be

spent on major transportation projects that have demonstrated an ability to improve traffic flow, lower travel times, and ease congestion. Among the revenues that could be used are additional sales tax, tolls, a vehicle license fee, a motor vehicle excise tax, and an employee tax levied on employers.

Many of the projects being discussed under this regional effort are also included in the statewide transportation plan being sent to voters this November – also known as Referendum 51. There are a number of projects in South King County on both lists. I am working closely with our local cities to identify which are the most critical - **but I need your input.** Please consider attending one of the upcoming transportation forums I am holding or drop me a note on the attached, postage-paid RSVP card.

In Conclusion

I hope this information has been helpful and I'd like to encourage you to seek other sources of information, as well as to attend one of the transportation community forums I will be holding this September. I believe you want accountability and results from your elected representatives. Many of you have told me that for far too long you've been misled on major public projects such as the baseball stadium and the third runway. You've also said that you are, therefore, skeptical of many government proposals. You have a right to know exactly what you are getting for your transportation dollar. I will work hard to ensure all your questions and concerns are heard.